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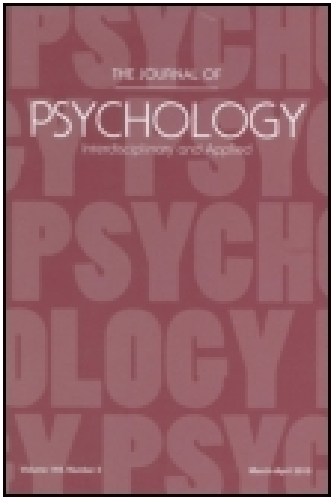


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# The Place of Personality in Social Psychology

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# THE PLACE OF PERSONALITY IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY*

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In nearly every aspect of human behavior, glaring or subtle differences reveal themselves between individuals. Ever since Darwin published his origin of species in 1859 with its sub-heading "Individual Differences" in the chapter on "Variation Under Nature," the search for and the explanation of individual differences has gone on at a rapid rate. A book recently published by a biologist (1945) bears the significant title, *The Biological Basis of Individuality*. After summarizing the evidence, the author, Leo Loeb, makes the statement that "we find, phylogenetically, a progressively increasing complexity in the activities of organisms and increasing differences between members of the same species, an increasing individualization which reaches its highest development in man" (32, p. 21).

In their little book, *Heredity, Race, and Society,* the biologists Dunn and Dobzhansky, have a section heading entitled "Each Man Is Unique" (18, p. 45). They state that "a biologist must assert the absolute uniqueness of every human individual" (p. 46). And they point out how "the chance that any two human beings, now living or having lived, have identical sets of genes is practically zero, identical twins always excepted" (p. 45 f.). The progress made in accounting for individual differences as a result of scientific developments in the field of biology and physics since Darwin's day are further exemplified in Schrödinger's concept of the "code script" found in the chromosome structure. This "code script" he believes is based on atomic arrangements (49, pp. 22 f.). And the biologist, J. B. S. Haldane, looking at "the political implications of human diversity" further emphasizes the uniqueness of man in his definition of "liberty."

> Liberty is the practical recognition of human polymorphism. I hasten to add, because I recognize that your brains work differently from my own, that few of you will accept this definition. That society enjoys the greatest amount of liberty in which the greatest number of human genotypes can develop their peculiar abilities. It is generally admitted that liberty

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[1]This article represents an elaboration of the general point of view expressed by Muzafer Sherif and the author in *The Psychology of Ego-Involvements* (51). The rough outline for the present article was discussed jointly.

> demands equality of opportunity. It is not equally realized that it demands a variety of opportunities, and a tolerance of those who fail to conform to standards which may be culturally desirable but are not essential for the functioning of society (24, p. 48).

The impetus which Darwin's work gave to the study of individual differences by psychologists is a well known story (11, 36). Beginning with Galton's famous study on mental inheritance (1869), through the early experimental work on individual differences of Binet, Stern, and Cattell, the study of individual differences was launched with a vengeance into 20th century America by Thorndike, Woodworth, Whipple, and others. Since Werner Wolff's ingenious studies, begun in 1925, a great deal of excellent experimentation has been done on the problem of individual differences as revealed in expressions of personality. The intra-individual consistency of behavior found by Wolff (54) was confirmed by the more statistical *Studies in Expressive Movement* of Allport and Vernon who also developed the concept of "psychomotor congruence" to account for the apparent consistency of variabilities found in their subjects (1). The earlier work of Wolff and Allport and Vernon has stimulated a number of further studies on this general subject of consistency of expression of personality. Those of Huntley (26) and Asch (9) may be cited as examples. All of the studies undeniably show that the uniqueness of the individual is revealed in the unique pattern of his expressive movements. The studies point up the fact that behavior which is biologically rooted does reflect individual differences and does exhibit remarkable consistency. This is perhaps most dramatically shown in the many studies of handwriting.

The important point is, however, that these individual differences and expressive movements occur in nearly all behavior *irrespective of the direction of behavior* (within limits to be discussed later.) The question that concerns us here is the direction behavior takes, what the behavior is for. For studies of individual differences, of the expression of personality, no matter how refined the methods and no matter how conclusive the results, shed comparatively little light on the basic question posed here for solution: what is the rôle of individual differences in social psychology?

It is in the attempted answers of what gives direction to behavior that most of the current confusion and muddle of the problem of personality arises. The failure to make a sharp distinction between the biologically rooted individual differences which reveal themselves in expression and the socially derived direction, aspiration, or goals of behavior irrespective of individual differences or uniquenesses of expressive movement inevitably pro-

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duces unworkable and unrealistic formulations. Conclusions derived from studies of personality expression cannot be used as explanations of the direction this expression takes. Hence, even though the study of individual differences has long since become a major field in psychology and finds an important place in any elementary course or text, the rôle of individual differences in systematic interpretation seems to have been neglected in favor of more quantitative studies or the practical application of what we think we have learned.

The special concern here is with the place of individual differences in social psychology. For in spite of the enormous amount of data concerning individual differences in ability, capacities, temperament, and various characteristics of personality collected during the past two decades, the functional significance of individual or personality differences in the field of social psychology seems in bad need of clarification. In saying this, we are not ignoring William Stern's personalistic psychology or the vigorous pleading of Gordon Allport that the psychologist's primary job should be the study of man's individuality. As will become clear later on, the psychology of "personality" cannot be treated as a special field without thereby losing the perspective necessary if the functional rôle of man's individuality or "uniqueness" is to be seen in proper perspective. And if social psychology is ever to have an adequate systematic basis, its concepts must be able to take into account the obvious differences between individuals, and the uniqueness of each individual, whatever the uniformities of the social context may be.

When the social psychologist turns to the fields of anthropology, ethnology, and sociology, he is likely to find the facts and functions of individual and personality differences neglected or obscured. Although sociologists and ethnologists may readily enough admit the importance of individual differences, this recognition all too often turns into mere lip service for some of them. For example, cultural apologists, such as Mead, Benedict, or Kardiner, in their search for differences between "cultures" and uniformities within a single "culture," tend by and large to gloss over or explain away the individual differences which discerning readers of their own works can pick out. As Murphy, Murphy and Newcomb indicate in their discussion of Mead's study of the Arapesh "the material seems ambiguous" (38, p. 77), or, as these authors state with respect to Benedict's study of the Zuni "one is not at all impressed by the arguments" concerning the uniformity of cultural influence (p. 747).

There are, of course, notable exceptions in the fields of ethnology and sociology. An example is the careful analysis of the problem of individual

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differences prepared by Hallowell in his "Handbook of Psychological Leads for Ethnological Field Workers" (25). Since Hallowell's position, stated in 1935, is so pertinent to the one developed here it deserves special mention. He writes:

> While it has been assumed from time to time that little, if any variability in individual behavior was characteristic of the so-called primitive peoples, closer observation has inevitably disclosed the fact that even in these relatively homogeneous cultures variability in personality traits, as well as in talent, thought, and behavior occur. Individuals are not completely moulded to a common pattern despite the forces at work which tend to produce this result. . . . Gross similarities must not be allowed to obscure the minutiae of genuine differences in thought and conduct. . . . Indeed, the very nature of culture allows for such variations. It is not a die which stamps out succeeding generations of individuals indistinguishable in all their habits and beliefs. It defines ends for which individuals strive and at the same time provides correlative means for accomplishing them, for gratifying human desires within traditional limits (p. 43 f.).

This type of analysis follows Sapir's warning in his brilliant note on "The Emergence of the Concept of Personality in a Study of Culture," where he wrote that "a stubbornly individual variation may be misinterpreted as a culture datum" (48, p. 409) and that both the cultural and psychological disciplines must strive for "an objectivity which is not merely formal and non-valuative but which boldly assays to bring every cultural pattern back to the living context from which it has been abstracted in the first place and, in parallel fashion, to bring every fact of personality formation back to its social matrix" (p. 410).

## Setting the Problem

Although certain writers have indicated what seems to be the proper formulation of the inter-relationship between individual differences and the social context, the systematic and precise *explanation* of *why* this relationship obtains seems not to have been explicitly stated. Instead, the frequent failure to distinguish on the one hand, between attitudes which have become a part of the ego and which were first on the stimulus side of the organism, and, on the other hand, the biologically given capacities, temperament, and other personality characteristics which have their locus originally within the organism has created much confusion and endless argument.

We can by and large agree, for example, with the statement of Murphy, Murphy and Newcomb that "most personality traits owe their constancy in a large (but unmeasurable) degree to a constancy in situations. In the

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child and in the adult, many traits are so well-defined that they insistently impose themselves upon all researchers, regardless of situation; but many of them reflect at any given moment both the inner make-up and the social world in which the person functions in such a way as to make the two logically (and experimentally) inseparable" (38, pp. 887 f.). We can also agree with the statement of Murphy and Jensen that "great 'inconsistency' of overt behavior may be resolved to relative 'consistency' when seen from the point of view of motive" (37, p. 387). But what we need to know, of course, is the significance for the experiencing individual of "constancy in situation." We need to know *why* there is consistency "when seen from the point of view of motive." A wide variety of laboratory experiments as well as evidence obtained from studies of group participation and from everyday life behavior, some of which have been previously reviewed, demonstrate both the fact and the function of ego-involvement and show conclusively that by and large consistency of performance is greatest in those situations where there is ego-involvement (51, ch. 6). The recognition of this fact may provide the missing link in a functional analysis of the generally stated problem of "personality and culture" and, it should, incidentally, provide more fruitful experimental possibilities than the statement from Murphy, Murphy and Newcomb above suggests as feasible.

One reason for the present unsatisfactory state of affairs seems to be due to the fact that many psychologists concerned with the problem of individual differences and personality have neglected the implications to be derived from the rich data accumulated by ethnologists and sociologists. On the other hand, many ethnologists and sociologists have by and large failed to keep abreast of the developments made and the concepts arrived at by psychologists. The result is, as Sapir noted, that what should be supplementary approaches have become divergent approaches to a single problem.

The contention here is that no matter which way the place of personality in social psychology is approached—whether from the group or culture down to the individual member, or from the individual member up to his social relations—the final formulation of the rôle played by individual differences and personality characteristics is the same. And furthermore, the formulation seems to be quite clear. If we maintain a functional approach throughout, if we refuse to get bogged down with static, classificatory schemes, or traditional dichotomies, there is no reason whatever to create two independent abstractions such as the "person" and the "socius."

What seems to be the place of personality in social psychology will be sketched here only in broad outline. The approach may appear extremely simple and self-evident.

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We may begin with the undeniable fact that individuals (with only rare exceptions) are born into a society which has certain values or norms. These values or norms are, of course, by no means uniform within any except the most primitive collective organization. In most highly industrialized nations of the Western world, for example, a complex differentiation of values or norms is found according to class, occupational, sex, racial, regional grouping, etc. The point need not be elaborated here. The important fact is that every individual at birth is surrounded by and very rapidly subjected to some particular pattern of norms. These norms are transmitted to him in the learning process by other individuals such as parents and teachers; by forms of architecture, music, etc.; by the methods of communication, transportation, production, distribution, monetary exchange, food habits, styles of dress, norms of punctuality, rules of play, and a thousand and one other established standards that begin to impose themselves in a more or less compelling way as the process of socialization begins. The important fact for us here is that all these standards or norms are first on the stimulus side. Just *what* standards, values, or norms hold sway in a particular society or group the individual is born into are, obviously, not in the least determined by the new-born individual.

As has been shown elsewhere in some detail, established social norms learned by the individual or norms that emerge in the course of interaction with other individuals, constitute for most people the major part of their ego (51). Loyalties, value attachment, and fixations formed are ego-involved attitudes and identifications that provide an important part of the content of the "I" or "me."

There are, to be sure, certain group loyalties of one kind or another that a small minority may acquire under certain circumstances because of some special physical, intellectual, artistic, or other endowment. Most people have innate limitations, for example, which make it impossible for them to play football on a major league team, to qualify for membership in the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers, or to win a Phi Beta Kappa key even if they have a chance to go through college. Such exclusive groupings only point up the fact of individual differences and in no way negate the equally apparent fact that for the vast majority of people, the vast majority of their loyalties and identifications have comparatively little to do with their own personal endowment.

Social or group norms—which, to repeat, are first on the stimulus side—thus become personal, ego-involved attitudes as a result of learning and functioning in a given milieu. If we restrict our illustrations to individuals

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brought up in a contemporary United States (with all that such a restriction implies concerning the contrast that might be made between an "American," a Trobriand Islander, or a citizen in the Soviet Union) we know that individuals may develop into Catholics or agnostics, liberals or conservatives, poor whites or well-to-do industrialists, regular attendants of Sunday School or delinquents, gangsters or members of an exclusive social club, skilled workers and union members or absentee owners with anti-labor prejudices, etc.

People are not liberals or conservatives, agnostics or Catholics, poor whites or upper class businessmen, gangters or members of exclusive clubs, Sunday School goers or delinquents, etc., because of any innate capacities or "traits" that predetermine their status or their group attachments. Quite the contrary. For example, the numerous studies which have sought out common innate capacities or traits of "liberals" and which distinguish them from "conservatives" have not turned up with any unequivocally positive conclusions.

The point has been frequently brought out by keen observers of concrete situations. For example, in a recent newspaper article, "The Fourteen Men Who Run Russia," H. E. Salisbury writes that "whatever their larger groupings, the fourteen men represent a wide range of individual backgrounds and personalities" (47). But Salisbury goes on to describe how, in spite of the differing backgrounds and the widely diversified personalities, each of the 14 men has come to the top because of some special ability and how, after the give and take of discussion, often heated, and the emergence of a majority point of view in the group interactions, each of the 14 men of the *Polit Bureau,* even though he may not have agreed at the beginning with the majority opinion, faithfully follows out the group decision, identifies himself with it.

It is in terms of reference groups (such as class, occupation, or race) and membership groups (such as unions, clubs, or family) that an individual derives his status or, subjectively, his sense of belongingness, personal identification, or ego-involvement. And it is generally only within these socially derived reference and membership groups, within the framework of a particular constellation of social values that individual differences and personality characteristics not only show themselves but become significant for social psychology. It is only within these socially derived references and membership groups that the nature and functional significance of individual differences can be understood by the social psychologist. It is only *after* the social psychologist has *placed* an individual in terms of his reference and

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membership groups, his loyalties and identifications, or his ego-involvements that individual variations of reaction and expression due to differences of ability, capacity, or temperament can really be evaluated. Once an individual has been placed, once his major constellation of values has been delineated, then his own personal characteristics, his particular abilities and temperamental traits, his capacities and expressive movements achieve real functional significance and must be studied if we are to understand the particular rôle an individual plays and the significance of his behavior *within* his reference or membership group. For it is here that the *consequences* of innate individual differences and personality characteristics are seen.

The chances are that within any large group, one would find in it (with certain limitations as already mentioned) a more or less normal or average distribution of biologically determined capacities or temperamental characteristics. If we could take a thousand Fascists, a thousand Communists, a thousand agnostics, a thousand Catholics, a thousand Sunday School children, a thousand delinquent children, a thousand gangsters, and a thousand members of exclusive social clubs, and if we could give them personality or aptitude tests which we had proved to our own satisfaction were in no way diagnostic of or affected by social attitudes, the chances would be extremely high that we would not, on the basis of these tests, be able to sort out very accurately the members of any one group from the members of any other group in the same general age level. And the chances are also high that *within* each group we would find a rather similar distribution of the capacities or characteristics we were measuring.

Yet, as we analyze the structure of these groups, we would find that some people in each rose to positions of leadership, that some were much more submissive to authority than others, that each person *within the hierarchy of the group structure* played a particular rôle and that this rôle was in no small part determined by the individual's particular endowments. In other words, whereas the study of the ego-involved attitudes of group members will give us something approximating a *J*-curve, within each of these groups so described we would be likely to find some normal distribution of individual differences within certain limits culturally defined. Hallowell (25) points out, for example, that "deviant individuals from the standpoint of the modal behavior of one society may approach, or even fall within, the central tendency of another ( p. 51). . . . The frame of reference to be kept in mind is always the culturally defined series of norms of a particular society, not those derived from the scale of values of some other society (that of the

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observer in particular) or some ideal norm" (p. 49). At the same time, obviously, no matter what group a person belongs to or what the cultural pressures are, he remains a unique individual.

## The Rôle of the Situation

In the past decade the concept of "situational determination" has assumed a prominent position in the interpretation of social behavior and the understanding of personality traits. The position has been well expressed by Murphy, Murphy and Newcomb in their chapter on "The Measurement of the Adult Personality" (38). They state that "what is really inherent in the organism is rather a wide range of *potentialities* more or less unique for each person" (p. 872). The effect of cultural pressures in bringing out a personality characteristic is also noted by Hallowell in his handbook:

> *Bravery in the abstract, then, has little meaning as a character trait.* It is a mode of response that functions in a specific cultural context. Its psychological significance must be interpreted *with reference to the cultural background of the individual, the supporting motivations which this supplies, as well as the situations which call forth its manifestation.* Consequently, it may be assumed that bravery as a typical personality trait of individuals in particular societies is indissolubly linked with relevant culture patterns" (25, p. 40, italics mine).

The consequences of this for the definition of what is "abnormal" have been brought out nicely by Foley (20).

Those who use the concept of situational determination cautiously are not ignoring the fact that within a given situation, individual differences can and do appear. Anyone who carefully observes the behavior of others (or of himself) in widely different situations, has noticed the different ways in which people react when they are involved in different situations. A member of an exclusive club will appear to be very democratic and friendly while he is in the club and talking to his fellow members, whereas this same person 10 minutes later may exhibit the most violent prejudices and hostilities when he is with his servants, his employees or any others he regards as "below" him in the social scale. An ordinarily shy, introverted, or submissive college professor may become surprisingly aggressive, bold, and recalcitrant in a group discussion where any ideas he identifies himself with are under attack. A person who usually moves with a certain lethargy, may show unusual bursts of speed in situations which *he* feels demand speed. An adolescent boy who is sent away to a private school may exhibit characteristics to his teachers and fellow students that may surprise, shock, or

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delight parents who didn't realize the boy "had it in him." Some insightful persons who know that they "have a violent temper" have taught themselves never to lose control of themselves in situations where it matters. Murphy, Murphy and Newcomb note that "if a psychologist happens to watch John when he is in a classroom with tired Miss *X*, who is trying to teach 50 children arithmetic, and also when John is in the Boy Scout group with energetic Mr. *Y*, who has 'a swell time with the kids,' the psychologist will point out that John is a very different boy in the two situations" (38 p. 338).

This does not imply, of course, that a person's behavior is *always* and *entirely* "determined by the situation." If this were the case, obviously our ability to predict behavior would be much less than it is now. There is an undeniable consistency or congruence of behavior in different situations, just as there is undeniable inconsistency and lack of congruence between other situations. The rôle of established attitudes must never be lost sight of. The problem is, of course, to find out precisely what the functional relationship is between the individual and any given situation, if this well-recognized paradox is to be solved.

It has been pointed out elsewhere that all perception, all judgment, all behavior whether verbal or non-verbal, takes place within a referential framework (51). Most of these frames of reference are acquired (learned) from past experience and from repeated exposure to a certain range of stimuli, to standardized forms, objects, or situations in the individual's environment or from short-cut verbal dictums uncritically accepted. Evidence from the experimental laboratory, from everyday life, the observations of sociologists and anthropologists show conclusively that these reference frames, once established, can and do determine perception, judgment, and behavior. Attitudes are reference frames with certain special characteristics. Among other characteristics, attitudes have affective properties of varying degrees, are more or less enduring, and range in the number and variety of stimuli to which they are referred. And most attitudes exhibited in the concrete social situations of everyday life are distinguished for their affective, motivational, or status involving characteristics. These attitudes are not discreet and isolated. Evidence from various sources all goes to show that once attitudes are formed they provide the major components of the ego—they are ego-involved attitudes that to a very large extent determine and direct an individual's behavior (51).

The particular attitudes that become the major components of the ego for any individual will, of course, vary according to the situations to which an individual has been exposed. Diverse loyalties and allegiances are

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built up, according to the particular ego identifications made. One's own position, achievements, status, are all relative to and determined by the particular scale of values of his reference and membership group. And even though the ego is a genetic development composed of a particular constellation of ego-attitudes, once it is formed it cannot realistically be thought of in any sense as static or unchangeable. The ego is re-formed during the period of adolescence as new instinctual urges begin to assert themselves; the ego can and often does change as new values merge in social situations or as new identifications offer better possibilities for the acquisition, the maintenance, or the fulfillment of instinctual needs (51).

In analyzing the effect of any situation on an individual, then, our first questions must always be: How does the individual perceive the situation? What does it mean to him? Has he anything at stake? How intensely is ego-involvement experienced? Unless and until we have answers to these questions, the significance of individual behavior is bound to remain obscure. As Rubinstein points out "between characterological attributes and human behavior there exists, not a mere one-sided dependence of behavior upon character, but a mutual dependence produced by the two-sided continuous interdependence between traits of character and motives" (46, p. 260). Since behavior always takes place within some referential framework, since this referential framework may or may not involve the ego, the particular potentiality or characteristics an individual may exhibit in a given situation are fully meaningful only if the functional significance of the referential framework to the individual is known.

Individual differences, then, all function *within* some framework of values or norms. Within this framework, the abilities, capacities, qualities of temperament, energy level and other biologically rooted characteristics determine to a large extent the particular rôle an individual will be able to play within the reference or membership groups he identifies himself with. For the social psychologist, the problem of individual differences becomes of paramount importance in his understanding of the relative position occupied by and the functional rôle played by different persons who identify themselves with the same reference group or the same membership group. In their summary of the dynamic factors in learning, Lois Murphy and Henry Ladd have expressed the point nicely as it bears on concrete problems of education. "The personality of each student has its own character; it is loosely or tightly organized, around a narrow or broad group of values, and has relied on its own ways of achieving values and tolerating disappointments" (40, pp. 157 f.). Personality is organized around a "group of values" but has "its own ways" of achieving these values.

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Many studies from a variety of sources and on a variety of characteristics show the change or modifications of behavior with changed situations. These investigations cannot be reviewed here in detail.[2] But at least attention can be drawn to the fact that carefully controlled investigations have shown that behavior labelled as aggression, dominance, extroversion, shyness, negativism, recklessness, submissiveness, etc., of the same individual have been shown to be considerably altered, sometimes even reversed, with changed situations. Likewise, characteristics of personality that are valued or aspired to have been shown to contrast with contrasting referential framework. Studies on the problem of leadership, for example, have clearly shown the referential nature of the qualities individuals must possess if they are to become leaders of groups of people who are bound together by subscription to a certain pattern of values (13, 14, 15, 41, 44).

The behavior of individuals who are members of deviant groups, such as gangs, is due to the fact that these individuals have identified themselves with values they found accepted by others and that were more satisfying in their striving for status or their fulfillment of instinctual needs than the normal values of the larger society which, for one reason or another, were denied them (51, chs. 9, 10). A reading of the rich sociological literature (particularly the studies of Thrasher and Clifford Shaw) completely undercuts any contention that members of deviant groups become members primarily because they have any inherent personality characteristics in common. Indeed, within almost any gang, a wide range of individual differences is found. Descriptions that are now coming to light of certain Nazi or Japanese fanatics found to be "criminals against civilization" reveal in most cases that the behavior they indulged in and that went so against the codes of civilized men was not determined by any pathological characteristics but by the unquestioning allegiance of these individuals to the values of their particular reference or membership groups (microcosms).

The case of Colonel Hoess of Auschwitz, reported by G. M. Gilbert in his book *The Nuremberg Diary,* is illustrative (22). Colonel Hoess was in active charge of the extermination of two and a half million Jews in Nazi concentration camps. He calmly and callously admitted the rôle he had

[2] A summary of many of the studies which show how behavior apparently characteristic of an individual in one type of situation can change in another type of situation is found in Murphy, Murphy and Newcomb (38, chs. 6, 7, and 12). Examples of pertinent investigations are those of Anderson (8), Bender and Schilder (10), Bridges (12), Goodenough (23), Jack (27), Jersild and Markey (28), Keister (29), Klein and Schoenfeld (30), L. B. Murphy (39), Page (43), Schuler (50), Updegra and Keister (52), and Walker (53). Other examples will be found in Sherif and Cantril (51, chs. 10, 11, and 12).

played. It can be seen from the following excerpts taken from Gilbert's *Diary,* that Hoess was merely carrying out ably and efficiently behavior which at the time he regarded as normal, as part of the game, as a way of playing *his* rôle and being loyal to *his* ego-involved values.

> [April 9—Discussing extermination of 2½ million in the camp.] I was interested in finding out how the order had actually been given and what his reactions were. He [Hoess] related it as follows: "In the summer of 1941 Himmler called for me and explained: 'The Fuhrer has ordered the Endlösung (final solution) of the Jewish question—and we have to carry out this task. For reasons of transportation and isolation, I have picked Auschwitz for this. You now have the hard job of carrying this out.' As a reason for this he said that it would have to be done at this time, because if it was not done now, then the Jews would later exterminate the German people,—or words to that effect. For this reason one had to ignore all human considerations and consider only the task,—or words to that effect." I asked him whether he didn't express any opinion on this subject or show any reluctance. "I had nothing to say: I could only say *Jawohl!* In fact, it was exceptional that he called me to give me any explanation. He could have sent me an order and I would have had to execute it just the same. We could only execute orders without any further consideration. That is the way it was. . . ."
>
> I pressed him further for some reaction to the enormity of what he was to undertake. He continued in the same apathetic manner: "At the moment I could not oversee the whole thing, but later I got some idea of the extent of the thing,—but I only thought of the necessity of it, as the order was put to me." I asked him whether he couldn't refuse to obey the orders. "No, from our entire training the thought of refusing an order just didn't enter one's head, regardless of what kind of order it was. . . . Guess you cannot understand our world,—I naturally had to obey orders and I must now stand to take the consequences."
>
> [April 12.] I asked him if he had ever considered whether the Jews whom he had murdered were guilty or had in any way deserved such a fate. Again he tried patiently to explain that there was something unrealistic about such questions because he had been living in an entirely different world. "Don't you see, we *SS* men were not supposed to think about these things; it never even occurred to us.—And besides, it was something already taken for granted that the Jews were to blame for everything." I pressed him for some explanation of why it was taken for granted. "Well, we just never heard anything else. It was not just newspapers like the *Stürmer* but it was everything we ever heard. Even our miltary and ideological training took for granted that we had to protect Germany from the Jews. . . . It only started to occur to me after the collapse that maybe it was not quite

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right, after I heard what everybody was saying.—But nobody had ever said these things before; at least we never heard of it. . . . Himmler was so strict about little things, and executed *SS* men for such small offenses, that we naturally took it for granted that he was acting according to a strict code of honor. . . . You can be sure that it was not always a pleasure to see those mountains of corpses and smell the continual burning.—But Himmler had ordered it and had even explained the necessity and I really never gave much thought to whether it was wrong. It just seemed a necessity."

[April 16.] "Then after the war started, Hitler explained that World Jewry had started a show-down with National Socialism;—that was in a Reichstag speech at the time of the French campaign,—and the Jews must be exterminated. Of course, nobody at that time thought it was meant so literally. But Goebbels expressed himself more and more sharply against the Jews. He did not attack England or Holland or France so much as the Jews as our enemy. He quoted Roosevelt and Morgenthau and others as people who actually intended to reduce Germany to a primitive state, and it was always stressed that if Germany was to survive then World Jewry must be exterminated; and we all accepted it as truth."

"That was the picture I had in my head, so, when Himmler called me to him, I just accepted it as the realization of something I had already accepted;—not only I, but everybody. I took it so much for granted that even at that moment this crass order to exterminate thousands of people (I did not know then how many)—even though it did frighten me momentarily—it fitted in with all that had been preached to me for years, and the problem itself, the extermination of Jewry, was not new,—but only that *I* was to be the one to carry it out—that frightened me at first. But after getting the clear direct order and even an explanation with it,—there was nothing left but to carry it out."

"So, that was the background for accepting a mass murder order?"

"Yes, when I think back on it all it is hard to figure out,—but at that time I didn't think of it all as propaganda, but something one just had to believe."

## Emergence of Latent Capacities

The emergence of new and often unexpected characteristics of behavior is, of course, most likely to be found when an individual is confronted with radically new situations in which he is bound to have intense ego-involvement and in which motivation is strong. Rubinstein puts the matter nicely in his statement that "*the motive of behavior* constitutes a potential future trait of character, a trait in its genesis as it were" (46, p. 260). Certain dramatic situations of everyday life such as accidents, fires, mob riots and the like frequently bring out in some participants a quality of behavior (such

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as heroism, cowardice, anxiety, cruelty, etc.) that may appear quite "uncharacteristic" of them.

History is rife with examples of men and women who, when they met certain situations and became ego-involved in them, suddenly developed new abilities that surprised themselves as well as others. Cecil Driver's recent biography of Richard Oastler, for example, brings this point out quite clearly (17). Oastler had been living a quiet life as the caretaker of a large estate in England in the early part of the nineteenth century. Suddenly he became aware of the appallingly bad conditions under which the men, women, and children were working in the textile mills in the nearby towns. He rapidly made *their* welfare, his concern. And in his subsequent adventurous life in which he became a leading spokesman for these underprivileged, he developed qualities of leadership, organization, public speaking, courage, etc., that no one would ever have previously assigned to him as distinguishing characteristics. In connection with this matter of the emergence of new characteristics in Oastler, Driver wrote:

> I didn't start out with such an idea. It grew upon me as the empirical evidence piled up over the years. Eventually I was driven to see its importance for any comprehensive theoretical structure, though I realized it would be for others to make use of the concept rather than myself.[8]

Any war is likely to provide opportunities to observe the emergence of new characteristics in men who are suddenly thrust into new situations. This is particularly true, of course, for men brought up in countries which do not have strong militaristic traditions. A few examples taken from observations of American soldiers during World War II, bring out in striking fashion the fact that latent capacities can and do emerge in the highly ego-involved situations wars create and that men who distinguish themselves for their acts of bravery, heroism, and self-sacrifice, do not always behave the way they do in such situations because of any personality "trait" such as ascendance, pugnaciousness, or exhibitionism which the psychologist could discover by tests or an observer could notice in the more normal everyday life circumstances of these same men.

One of the World War II's keenest observers, Bill Mauldin, wrote:

> Many celebrities and self-appointed authorities have returned from quick tours of war zones (some of them getting within hearing distance of the shooting) and have put out their personal theories to batteries of photographers and reporters. Some say the American soldier is the

[8]Privately communicated to the author.

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> same clean-cut young man who left his home; others say morale is sky-high at the front because everybody's face is shining for the great Cause.
>
> They are wrong. The *combat man isn't the same clean-cut lad* because you don't fight a kraut by Marquis of Queensberry rules. You shoot him in the back, you blow him apart with mines, you kill or maim him the quickest and most effective way you can with the least danger to yourself. He does the same to you. He tricks you and cheats you, and if you don't beat him at his own game you don't live to appreciate your own nobleness.
>
> *But you don't become a killer.* No normal man who has smelled and associated with death ever wants to see any more of it. *In fact, the only men who are even going to want to bloody noses in a fight after this war will be those who want people to think they were tough combat men, when they weren't.* The surest way to become a pacifist is to join the infantry.
>
> I don't make the infantryman look noble, because he couldn't look noble even if he tried. Still there is a certain nobility and dignity in combat soldiers and medical aid men with dirt in their ears. *They are rough and their language gets coarse because they live a life stripped of convention and niceties.* Their nobility and dignity come from the way they live unselfishly and risk their lives to help each other. *They are normal people who have been put where they are, and whose actions and feelings have been molded by their circumstances.* There are gentlemen and boors; intelligent ones and stupid ones; talented ones and inefficient ones. But when they are all together and they are fighting, despite their bitching and griping and goldbricking and mortal fear, they are facing cold steel and screaming lead and hard enemies, and they are advancing and beating the hell out of the opposition (34, pp. 12-15, italics mine).

It will be noticed that Mauldin recognizes that within the constellation of values which emerge in the combat situation, there are still profound individual differences. But apparently, although one man may be characterized as a gentleman and the other as a boor, the gentleman may, under the *circumstances of the moment,* become just as dangerous and treacherous a fighter, just as much a killer as the boor.

In the gripping motion picture, *True Glory,* prepared by the Office of War Information and the British Ministry of Information to give citizens some idea of the invasion and the early fighting on the continent, the sayings of some of the GI's pictured in action confirm Mauldin's observations.[4] An infantryman says: "I spent four years in the infantry and I saw my share. And during that time I only met three men who liked to fight—and they

[4]The following excerpts were taken verbatim from the motion picture.

were a little cracked. But it had to be done. Now that it's over, I feel good." Another soldier who was among those parachuted down to take part in the bloody and losing battle of Arnheim makes the following statement: "Towards the end we knew the situation was bad. We knew we were hemmed in and might never get out. I will never forget the way our men behaved. *Men you knew as the toughest fighters became gentle—kind and considerate to one another.* I knew a lot more about men after Arnheim."

The point is further brought home by correspondence undertaken with friends of men who had received from the President of the United States the Congressional Medal of Honor for outstanding feats of bravery.[5] Only one illustration can be cited here. It is typical of the rest. According to the newspaper report of the White House ceremony and the description of the man decorated, "Second Lieutenant ———, 31, of ————, who on February 11th led his unit in the rescue of an enemy-surrounded platoon near Oberhofer, France, stormed four buildings unaided and killed eight Germans and captured 39." Through the kindness of one of the leading citizens of the small town from which the lieutenant came, the writer soon got in touch with some people who had known the lieutenant since he was a small boy. These people were simply asked if they could give their impression of the young man whom I understood they knew. I did not, of course, reveal at all the purpose of the inquiry. Following is a letter received from a woman who had known Lieutenant ——— since early childhood.

> I have always known Lt. ———, and as a boy he was *very quiet, never quarrelsome.* He attended the public school and Sunday School of the community. Also the high school. As a young man he worked to help provide for a widowed mother who was left in poor health. He is very intelligent, has a swell personality, and a good character. Well thought of in the community in which he resided. A very adept scholar. The last two years before entering the service he worked in the defense plant. In my estimate he is very deserving of an education.

As can be seen, personal courage, aggression or combativeness are not cited as personality characteristics of the lieutenant under "normal" conditions.

Another example shows the complete "reversal" of a personality characteristic brought about by the stress of a battle-created situation.[6]

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[5]The names of those with whom I corresponded were taken from newspaper reports of the ceremonies. I selected men from small towns who would be well known in their community.

[6]This description was given the author by Anthony C. Gosse, Princeton, '46, who spent several months in a convalescent hospital with the captain he describes.

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> The captain was a southerner in his mid-twenties. He had been a rifle-company commander on the western front. He was very well liked by both his fellow patients and the hospital personnel. His outstanding personality traits were modesty and the friendliness and kindliness of his disposition. As a boy he had been fond of duck-hunting but had given up the sport because, as he said, "I didn't see much fun in killing." Once, during a discussion of war experiences, he told the following story. He had commanded a company during the disastrous Battle of the Bulge, when the German Army had broken through the American lines at the Ardennes Forest. The captain found himself cut off from the rest of our forces and surrounded by the enemy. His situation was desperate. He had only about 40 men left, no food, little ammunition and no idea where the American lines were. In addition to these difficulties, his company had a large number of German prisoners on hand. There was no way to get rid of the prisoners by sending them to a camp in the rear area. Guarding them with his depleted forces was out of the question. Therefore, he determined to kill the prisoners. He and the sergeant took them out in the woods in small groups and shot them. Among the captain's group was a young boy, only about 15 or 16 years old. The captain concluded his story with this remark, "He was crying and begging me to save him and I was kind of sorry I had to kill him."

In a penetrating account of "Moochie the Magnificent," W. A. Nielsen (42) shows how the personal characteristic of Moochie made him an undisputed leader under a certain set of conditions brought about during World War II and how Moochie rather suddenly became a lonesome and almost disregarded man when the conditions, the values, important for the group, disintegrated. Before the war Moochie had worked in a garage, spent his spare time in poolrooms. He joined the Marines early in the war and was captured along with nearly 100 other men on Guam. As the account states, in the prison camp:

> As the months dragged on, rumor, suspicion, and anxiety wore away at the men's spirits. Then, gradually, and without design, Moochie became the leader of the prison camp. He was reckless and fearless, and he had always been big—on Guam, before he was taken, he had weighed 235 pounds. He was friendly and cheerful by nature and he laughed easily. In the prison camp, these commonplace civilian virtues, *which in ordinary life had brought him very little reward, became respected and admired.* He made jokes at the expense of the guards and took his punishment without flinching. He devised a system by which the prisoners regularly looted the cargoes they unloaded of quantities of sugar and fish. When the men fell sick, his laughter was their only medicine (pp. 59 f., italics mine).

Moochie's leadership was absolutely solidified when he took an active, heroic part in a prison uprising and bore his subsequent punishment with unusual stoicism. Nielsen met Moochie and his prison-mates after *V-J* Day as they were on the first lap of their journey homeward, in a train traveling through Japan. At first the conversation of the men was about the past, the prison camp and all its happenings. In this situation, "Moochie ruled over the group with easy, kingly grace. He was the magnetic center toward which the others pointed their conversation, and in little ways they deferred to him and showed their regard" (p. 61). But the situation suddenly changed:

> And then, along about one o'clock in the morning, Moochie's crown was lifted from him. Quietly and rather suddenly, it just disappeared. The conversation had slowed down from time to time before that, and the silent gaps between stories had begun to grow longer and longer. Finally, everyone stopped talking There was a long pause. A sailor who had been taken in the Philippines and who had spent a couple of years with Moochie in camp said, "Listen, goddam it let's stop talking about it. It's over now and I'm ready to forget it. From now on, I'm concentrating on getting home."
>
> "Right!" someone added quickly. "I'm ready to knock it off. Let's change the subject to something pleasant, something natural."
>
> Just that suddenly, the conversation turned a corner. The talk from then on concerned home, wives and Stateside things, the camp world passed into memory, and *Moochie moved from the center to the periphery of the group.* At first, neither he nor the others seemed to be aware of the change that had taken place. The next time I glanced across at him, Moochie was looking out of the train window at the dark, and the bull session was gradually breaking up. When I went to sleep, Moochie was still staring out of the window (pp. 61 f., italics mine). "Maybe my biggest days are in back of me," Moochie remarked.

Moochie finally felt so isolated that he walked back to another car filled with English soldiers. He struck up a conversation with one of them named Haines and part of the conversation following showed Moochie's awareness of the changed conditions.

> "That's surely no way for you to be talking, Mooch. They'll be looking to you to lead the way."
>
> "No, no more, Haines," Moochie said. From here on in, I'm just a guy who used to work in a gas station" He looked down the aisle of the train and smiled. "Well, it was fun while it lasted." Then he laughed and shook his head. "Can you imagine talking like that about the camp?"
>
> "I can imagine it," Haines said (p. 63).

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## Inadequacy of Formulations That Neglect Implications of Individual's Group Reference

As stated above, whether the social psychologist approaches the problem of personality from the point of view of the "culture" or the group, or whether he begins with the individual and works up to group relationship, his final formulation should be the same. The confusion in theory and understanding of the rôle of individual differences in social psychology resulting from the failure to see the precise inter-relationships of an individual with his group, the failure to take into account the important fact of ego-involvement and identification can be briefly illustrated with reference, first, to the treatment of the subject from the "cultural" point of view, and second, from the point of view of a psychologist who starts with the individual. There is, of course, no implication that *all* who approach the problem from the point of view of the sociologist or ethnologist agree with the illustration chosen, or that *all* psychologists who approach the problem from the point of view of the individual agree with the particular formulation discussed here. However, since our illustrations represent comparatively detailed and careful analyses, they can, at least, serve as examples of recent approaches to the problem.

### 1. *The Cultural Approach*

On the side of the "culturist" we choose as our example, the discussion of "Culture and Personality" by Kluckhohn and Mowrer which they offer as "a conceptual scheme" in the *American Anthropologist* (1944). These authors are careful to point out that "in the personality context, the important criterion is always: to what social categories do the individual and those socializing him have a sense of 'belongingness' (or of aspiration)?" (31, p. 8). Before one can understand what these authors term the "idiosyncratic component" of personality, they hold that it is necessary first of all to factor out three other components—the universal, the communal, and the rôle components of personality. If this is not done, they maintain, "we shall continually run the danger of ascribing to some known 'accident' of the individual's life history a trait which he actually shares with almost all other Americans who have not been subjected to that event-process at all. Or we shall interpret a person's behavior in a given situation as reflecting certain trends in his 'core personality' (idiosyncratic component) when he is only conforming, very acceptably, to social expectations of performance of that rôle. Only after careful scrutiny can behavior be taken at its face value as providing clues to the idiosyncratic variant of socially

approved norms which any human organism's action represents" (p. 25). The authors further point out that new potentialities of behavior will reveal themselves with new situations. In stating their feeling that the question of heredity *or* environment is essentially meaningless they state that "the only pertinent question is: Which of various genetic potentialities will be actualized as a consequence of a particular series of life-events in a given physical, social, and cultural environment?" (p. 10).

We have here, then, from Kluckhohn and Mowrer, recognition of facts which we have indicated above are all too often neglected. It should be especially noted that the recognition of the necessity of placing an individual rather precisely within his culture is itself an advance over more rigid "culture apologists" such as Benedict. But mere recognition of facts is not enough. The facts must be explained and their implications seen in concrete social situations. It is in the explanation of these facts that the authors seem to go astray with what they themselves admit are "classificatory abstractions." Hence, they fail to account for the ways in which what is first external on the social stimulus side becomes interiorized. In other words, they do not see the functional relationship that obtains between the individual and the reference or membership group with which he concerns himself, even though, in a previous article, the authors themselves state that the first of four "basic assumptions for the construction of a 'comprehensive system of personality theory' is: the behavior of all living organisms is *functional*" (35, p. 69).

First of all, because they do not address themselves to a problem functionally stated—the rôle of individual differences (or personality characteristics) in concrete social life—they are forced to make what they call "a genuine distinction between an individual as 'an integrate in action' and his 'reputation' (35, p. 77). Because of "the two-fold meaning of the term personality," they write "we shall employ 'personality' in this chapter to refer to the individual as an organized, adjusting, behaving entity, not to the way in which this individual may influence other individuals (or things)" (35, p. 77). In their second article they accept Mark May's definition of personality "as social stimulus value" (31, p. 2). They state in a footnote that one of two inductions the history of science permits is that "a conceptual scheme may be appropriate for analyzing one group of problems, utterly inappropriate for treating the same set of data with a view to a different group of equally legitimate questions" (p. 2). This contention may be seriously doubted if the "problem" and "questions" are to have any concrete significance.

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The result is that the authors are inevitably driven to an abstract analysis, filled with paradoxes which they try to explain by their elaborate classification of personality "components." One of these paradoxes is their statement that "a theory of personality must explain equally the ultimate uniqueness of each personality and the observed facts of personality types" (p. 2). They also acknowledge "the utility of the *id, ego* and *super-ego* division within the psychoanalytic frame of reference" (p. 26)—in spite of the fact that students of human behavior who concern themselves especially with differences between the norms of various social organizations and differences of group, class, occupational, etc., standards within most modern complex social organizations, should be among the first to recognize the invalidity of these Freudian concepts.[7] They cite with apparent approval, the "personality sub-division" of Freud, Murray, and others (pp. 25 f.).

The bias into which their oversimplified cultural approach leads them is revealed in the statement that "there are only a few extreme cases in which an individual is committed in detail by his particular genetic equipment to particular psychological traits" (31, p. 10). The "idiosyncratic component" of personality is for them the result of the combined influences of "biological, cultural, social, and physical environmental determinants" (p. 22)—determinants "which are introduced by 'accident' or 'fate'" (p. 17). Their neglect of the complex psychological processes that must be understood if we are to have a valid and adequate account of the process of individual socialization may be seen in the following paragraph.

> Anthropology has made what is perhaps its most distinctive contribution by calling attention to the sparsity of *universal* cultural determinants of personality. It has shown that many social values which were formerly assumed to be common to all humanity are functions of a particular culture. But the cross-cultural analyses of the anthropologists have left a few universals. All societies have tabus on incest. All societies teach that it is "wrong" to murder members of one's own social group. *And all societies have as part of their culture the precept of loyalty to the in-group* (p. 15, last italics mine).

This last sentence, though perhaps accurate enough on the descriptive level, completely begs the question and implies that somehow there are mystic, supra-individual forces in all cultures that prescribe loyalty to the in-group. As has been shown elsewhere careful observers such as Clifford Shaw and William Healy, working with concrete individuals in concrete "in-group" relationships have made valuable contributions as to *why* and *how* such in-

[7] The reasons for the invalidity of these concepts is reviewed in some detail in (51, ch. 14).

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group loyalties are inevitable psychological by-products of an individual-group relationship (51, ch. 10).

### 2. *The Psychological Theory of "Traits"*

Gordon W. Allport has probably done more than anyone in recent years to bring personality to the forefront of psychology. He opens his well known book on the subject with the sentence that "The outstanding characteristic of man is his individuality" (4, p. 1). Over the past two decades he has become a vigorous exponent of the theory of personality traits. Although Allport's doctrine cannot be elaborated here in detail, at least some of the dilemmas of Allport's position can be pointed out.

Allport takes exception to definitions of personality offered by certain sociologists, such as Bogardus and Faris, who maintain that personality "is the subjective aspect of the culture of a group." Such conceptions he believes grossly over-simplify the nature of personality which "cannot then be regarded as dependent completely upon culture" (2, p. 838). We can agree. But there is no need because of this to draw the sharp distinction Allport does between the "person" on the one hand and the "socius" on the other hand—the latter "defined as that part of the personality which comprises common social attitudes" (p. 838). Allport is vigorous in his contention that "the personality of each man is a unique integration, and as such is a datum for psychology, *and for psychology only*" (p. 838, italics mine). "The person," he says "is too involved and too unique a problem for any social science to treat. It is the subject matter of a special branch of psychology" (p. 838). "Personality is not merely the subjective side of culture, and it is therefore not primarily a sociological problem" (p. 838).

In thus minimizing the significance of anything but a strictly "psychological" approach to the study of personality and, furthermore, making the study of personality "a special branch of psychology," Allport is introducing a bias and inevitably laying the groundwork for an abstract approach which is unable to handle adequately the problem of the rôle of individual differences or personality characteristics in concrete social situations. Not only are the keen observations of social scientists ruled out but also, apparently, much of more "traditional" psychology (concerned for example with perception, judgment, or affectivity) is implicitly allowed to go by the board.

Allport maintains that "Robinson Crusoe, 'Casper Hauser, the 'wolf children,' Itard's idiot, any hermit or solitary explorer, are deficient or else completely lacking in cultural contacts, and yet one and all they have personalities which are as interesting as they are intricate" (2, p. 838). With-

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out arguing this point in detail here, it should nevertheless be noted that Crusoe, the hermit, or the explorer have all been molded by earlier social contacts even though they may live in isolation as adults.[8] Psychologists and social scientists are interested in individuals whose various capacities and temperaments react toward and are expressed in full-bodied social situations which are, in turn, perceived, judged, and reacted to within some relational system built up (learned) largely from social contacts.

The functional difficulty of Allport's position is simple to diagnose: he does not make a distinction, on the one hand, between those values or norms that constitute the superstructure of society or the standards of various groups which are first on the stimulus side and become, under certain circumstances, interiorized in the individual as *his* ego-involved attitudes and, on the other hand, the biologically determined capacities, abilities, and temperamental characteristics unique to the individual which are among the active or potential determinants of behavior *irrespective* of the social context but which (except in the very rare instances of the Robinson Crusoe or the hermit) always function within *some* social context with all its values and standards.

One of the basic dilemmas Allport faces is that of making a workable distinction between the concept of "trait" and "attitude." He states, for example, "that traits and not attitudes are the primary qualities in personality" (2, p. 838). A trait is defined "as a generalized and focalized neuropsychic system (peculiar to the individual), with the capacity to render many stimuli functionally equivalent, and to initiate and guide consistent (equivalent) forms of adaptive and expressive behavior" (4, p. 295).

Yet, Allport maintains "that the more generalized the attitude becomes the more it resembles a trait" (2, p. 838). "In the case of a more widely extended attitude, e.g., toward the world at large (*Weltanschauung*), there is no real distinction between attitude and trait" (4, p. 293). "Under certain conditions special classes of traits may be distinguished and selected for study: e.g., *generalized attitudes, generalized interests, values* or *philosophies of life*. . . . For instance, a generalized *radical* attitude directed toward

[8]Although the source material of Gesell's account of the "wolf-child" (21) has been seriously questioned (19, ch. 7), for whatever the original data are worth, it might be pointed out here that this child had had little contact with human culture for her first eight years, yet appeared "normal" both physically and mentally. However, the child had no genetically formed ego with the result, among other things, that she had "no spontaneous social relations with people" (21, p. 62), and spent a great deal of her time in the orphanage sitting in a dark corner. If this actually was the case, to imply that this child's personality was not affected in an important way by lack of culture contacts would be to reduce "personality" to a bloodless, fleshless abstraction.

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all or many features of the social environment may with equal propriety be called either an attitude *or* a trait" (3, pp. 13 f.). These attitudes which are so generalized that they may be called "traits" "represent modes of adjustment which most individuals are *forced* to develop (albeit in differing degrees) in our standard civilized environment" (3, p. 15).

The social context, then, simply cannot be disregarded by Allport. A revealing passage is found in the monograph on trait names (prepared with H. S. Odbert) which shows clearly the way in which social factors raise their ugly heads to bother the psychologist.

> There is, *unfortunately for scientific psychology,* a second influence determining our lexicon of trait names, namely the tendency of each social epoch to characterize human qualities in the light of standards and interests peculiar to the times. Historically, the introduction of trait-names can be seen to follow this principle of cultural (not psychological) determination to a striking degree Presumably human beings through countless ages had displayed such qualities as *devotion, pity,* and *patience,* but these terms were not established with their present meanings until the church made of them recognized and articulated Christian virtues" (3, p. 2, first italics mine).

The authors go on to point out the emergence of new trait names following the Protestant Reformation with its introspectiveness, and new trait names emerging in other historical periods and state that trait names are "invented in accordance with cultural demands" (p. 3). This is consistent with Allport's later statement that "the term attitude . . . usually signifies the acceptance or rejection of the object or concept of value to which it is related" (4, pp. 293 f.).

These quotations should be sufficient to point out the difficulty Allport encounters in trying to make a distinction between a "trait" (neuropsychic system) and a generalized attitude. The various definitions and classifications he presents in order to make his meaning clear seem not only to be unsuccessful, but further to confound the conceptual problems. He notes, for example, that "traits as a rule have no such clear-cut direction. They are often merely stylistic, and their significance is often adverbial rather than prepositional." But since the terms attitude and trait are in some cases "inter-changeable," it is legitimate to speak of "a well-integrated trait of patriotism"—just as it is legitimate to speak of a "trait" (or attitude) of conservatism, radicalism, or extroversion (4, p. 294). Here we begin to wonder again about traits as "neuropsychic systems." What do we do about the person who is generally quick and who happens to be a radical and another person who is equally quick and who happens to be a conserva-

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tive? Although it cannot be denied that both the attitude of radicalism and conservatism acquired in the course of an individual's life history have a physiological basis (so far completely inexplicable), the qualitative nature of this "neuropsychic system" which should properly be called an attitude when finally determined in the distant future will no doubt be quite different from the neuropsychic basis of a more temperamental characteristic such as speed of action. We encounter characteristically "cheerful" atheists, characteristically "cheerful" Catholics; individuals who are equally patriotic but who run the whole gamut of individual differences in abilities, capacities, temperamental, or motor characteristics. To lump together what we would call ego-involved attitudes (such as radicalism, conservatism, atheism, Catholicism, or patriotism) and biologically determined abilities or temperamental characteristics only makes for confusion and disregards the genesis, the function, and the real relationship between socially derived attitudes and biologically determined individual differences.

Allport contends that the *"socius"* is a "useful abstraction" for the social sciences (2, p. 838). Yet ruling out attitudes or making them equivalent to traits (if they are sufficiently generalized) only turns his conception of personality into another abstraction. Allport's abstract personality seems somehow to live in a social vacuum. For example, he cites Likert's study which showed that over twice as many students in northern colleges believed that the lynching of a Negro was unjustifiable under any circumstances as did students in a southern college. Commenting on this study, Allport says "In making this study, Likert was not dealing with personalities but with *socii*" (p. 838). Again, in discussing (with Bruner and Jandorf) the effect of social catastrophe on personality as revealed in concrete case studies, he writes that "very rarely does catastrophic social change produce catastrophic alterations in personality" (5, p. 7). And yet, later on in the same study, the authors note that among other consequences of the extreme situations were "defeat and resignation, regression, conformity, adoption of temporary frames of security, changes in standards of evaluation, lowering of levels of aspiration, heightened in-group feeling, increased fantasy and insulation, and, above all, increased planning and problem-solving" (p. 20). In spite of all these changes, the authors maintain that "the basic structure of personality persists" (p. 20). We can only ask the question: if all of the changes the authors found in their own data are not changes in the basic structure of personality, then what are they? "Basic structure of personality" here becomes equivalent to "ability, temperamental characteristics or modes of expression." If this is the meaning of "basic personality

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structure" then there is no need to look further into generalized attitudes as Allport has.

The attempt is made to clarify the nature of traits further by saying that "some traits thus seem to have *motivational* (directional) significance, and some mere *instrumental* significance" (4, p. 323). Allport believes "this distinction is a useful one. But it must not be overworked. There is no sharp line between motivational traits and stylistic traits, between *direction* and *manner of expression*" (p. 323). The importance of the distinction between expressive behavior and the direction, the "what for" of that behavior was pointed out earlier in this discussion. What Allport regards as "motivational traits" are essentially ego-involved attitudes which define a person's loyalties, his aspirations, his goals. Allport quotes with approval Droba's distinction between an attitude and a trait which states that "honesty, aggressiveness, and trustworthiness are traits because the object to which they refer has a very wide range and hence is very vague. Racialism, militarism, and liberalism, are attitudes because they refer to definite objects, races, war, and social change, respectively" (2, p. 837). But such characteristics as honesty and trustworthiness as noted above, have not been found in controlled studies to have a "vague" reference: they have been found, on the contrary, to change (sometimes markedly) in the same individual under different circumstances. They are not "generalized and focalized neuropsychic systems peculiar to the individual."

Another distinction Allport makes to handle the fundamental dilemma his position poses for him is that between "common" and "individual" traits. He writes that "in the strict sense of the definition of traits only the individual trait is a true trait" (4, p. 299). "The common (continuum) trait is not a true trait at all, but is merely a measurable aspect of complex individual traits" (p. 299). And yet because "there are certain aspects of personality in respect to which all people in a given culture may reasonably be compared" (p. 299) common traits are admitted into the scheme and are defined as "those aspects of personality in respect to which most mature people within a given culture can be compared" (p. 300). Clearly what Allport is talking about under the heading of "common traits" are those forms of behavior which the particular norms of the society or special group tend to elicit and place a positive value on. As he says, they "represent forms of adjustment which all individuals by virtue of biological necessity and cultural pressure must in various degrees adopt" (p. 299). But this greatly oversimplifies the picture. Especially in most contemporary western societies with their many complex groupings, there are comparatively few really "common

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pressures." A distinction between "common" and "individual" traits overlooks the enormous variation in reference and membership group loyalties with their subtle or clear-cut values and standards and in no way meets head on the functional problem of understanding the significances of an individual's characteristics in terms of what *he* regards as *his* group loyalties and identifications.

The situation is further confused by the fact that Allport recognizes that traits do change under different situations. But he does not follow through the important implications of this recognition. He states for example that "the ever-changing nature of traits and their close dependence upon the fluid conditions of the environment forbid a conception that is over-rigid or over-simple" (4, p. 312). He writes further that "perfect consistency will never be found and must not be expected. There are many reasons why this is so. For one thing, in the same personality, traits often contradict each other. People may be both ascendant *and* submissive, perhaps submissive only toward those individuals *bearing traditional symbols of authority and prestige;* and towards everyone else aggressive and domineering" (p. 330, last italics mine). Again "traits are often aroused in one type of situation and not in another; not all stimuli are equivalent in effectiveness. Successful adaptation and mastery require a trait to remain loose-knit, so that its determinative influence may be modified or checked according to special demands of the moment" (pp. 331 f.). And in discussing the *J*-curve, he writes that "most people do not depart markedly from the norm that is culturally established" (p. 336).

It seems impossible to reconcile such statements with the view that traits "are always biophysical in nature" (p. 342), that they are "neuropsychic systems" (p. 295). If generalized attitudes such as patriotism and radicalism can be called traits then they are not biophysical; if traits depend upon fluid conditions, then they are not generalized; if traits vary with circumstances and with "personal significance" (p. 340) and if this "personal significance" can be reversed in extreme situations, as has been shown elsewhere to be the case (51, ch. 12) then the concept of "traits" as developed by Allport becomes nebulous indeed.

In more recent publications (6, 7) Allport has used the concept of ego-involvement as "the hypothesis needed to settle a long-standing controversy" (6, p. 461). He states that "when there is ego-involvement there are general traits; when there is no ego-involvement there are no general traits" (p. 461). However, the problem of "traits" is not "settled" by this recognition and the theory of traits is not salvaged. The problem is still over-

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simplified, the contradictions of his position are still unresolved. In a later publication he reiterates his belief that by searching for the "unique key factors (central traits)" we have most hope of understanding personality and "normal adult motivational patterns" (7, p. 68).

The significant differences of behavior when an individual is ego-involved in a situation, compared to the same individual's behavior when he is not ego-involved have been pointed out elsewhere (51, ch. 6). Certainly ego-involved situations are more likely to "bring out" latent capacities. And if a variety of ego-involved situations entail for the individual the same pattern of values and identifications, then there will be greater consistency in his behavior. However, to say because of this fact that "when there is ego-involvement there are general traits" is not precise. There are numerous cases of everyday life behavior when a person exhibits some capacity or temperamental characteristic in non-ego-involved situations. Indeed it is very difficult for a person of extremely high or a person of extremely low intelligence not to show this capacity in almost every situation he meets, whether it is ego-involved or not; likewise it is relatively unlikely that an extremely phlegmatic person or a person extremely sanguine by temperament will not show these characteristics in many non-ego-involved situations. In brief, a full realization of the implication of ego-involvement and of situational-determination, would force a much more radical revision of Allport's trait theory.

As we noted at the beginning of this discussion, the fact of individual differences and the rôle they play in social life must be recognized and understood if social psychology is to be complete. No one can disagree with Allport when he says that "in everyday life, no one, not even a psychologist, doubts that underlying the conduct of a mature person there are characteristic dispositions" (4, p. 339). The last two words in Allport's own sentence have been deliberately omitted from this quotation—the words, "or traits." For the concept of trait as developed, seems too ambiguous, too abstract, too contradictory to use in trying to understand the rôle of the individual differences in social psychology. In brief, some psychologists, approaching the subject of personality from the "individualistic point of view" by neglecting the genesis and functioning of socially derived attitudes, fail to place an individual in his social context. Hence, the rôle of biologically determined individual differences or personality characteristics is not cleanly differentiated and the concept of personality "traits," as defined, is unworkable for an understanding of the significance of individuality as it functions in social life. Some ethnologists, on the other hand, approaching the subject of per-

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sonality from the "cultural point of view," by oversimplifying or ignoring the process of socialization itself, have failed to show how and why an individual's judgments and behavior are affected by his placement in a social group. Hence the rôle of biologically determined individual differences or personality characteristics cannot be clearly defined or delineated and tends to be overlooked.

## A Note on the "Adjusted" Personality

The formulation presented above is relevant for those whose business it is to determine causes of personal maladjustment. The scheme would demand that the diagnostician should try to determine first of all the particular constellation of ego-involved loyalties and identifications of the patient. The tremendous extent to which personal conflicts can be and often are determined by conflicting or disparate values, standards, or norms with which an individual has himself identified himself in his various reference and membership group relationships has been pointed out elsewhere (51, chs. 10, 11, 14).

Even when a person in more or less "normal" circumstances in most countries today is subjected to relatively little change, transition or emergence in group norms, he is still more likely than not to have identified himself with a number of values which are by no means all overlapping. For example, Murphy, Murphy and Newcomb have summarized a number of studies which reflect the consequences for a child of what they call "the ambivalence of values" found in present day conventional social patterns in the United States (38, ch. 7). The child may find aggressive behavior valued in his play group, while he is taught by his parents to respect authority and submission; the standards of performance that bring status with respect to age-mates are not by any means always the same standards that bring respect from teachers, etc. Adults, too, even in relatively stable times are apt to find themselves in a number of marginal positions: the values upheld by the church may conflict with those a person supports as a member of a labor union and these in turn may at times conflict with the standards he would like to follow as a citizen of a community or nation; an upper class industrialist who subscribes verbally and publicly to democracy, freedom of speech, and equality of opportunity may find that these precepts sometimes conflict with his best interest as a businessman whose profits may be cut down if labor becomes strongly organized or if educational campaigns for public ownership are not actively opposed or squelched. Women who want to engage in some profession and who happen at the same time to be wives and mothers are more likely than not to find both public opinion and

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circumstances against them. Certain members of the middle class, such as white collar workers, foremen, or small independent proprietors frequently develop mixed loyalties to labor and management. The list of "marginal men" in our society is large indeed and has become a special area of sociological inquiry.

Although the point is fairly obvious, many writers and diagnosticians, although they may pay lip service to the thesis that personal conflicts are often generated by conflicts in objective conditions, fail to take this thesis into account when it comes to concrete, functional analysis. The consequence is, therefore, that phrases such as "the whole personality," the "organized personality," the "integrated personality," have become so overworked as to be almost meaningless. One naturally asks what personality is "organized" around and what creates an "integrated" personality? The contention here is that "organization" and "integration" can only be understood if the constellation of ego-involved attitudes is determined.

### 1. *Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis*

The situation cannot be adequately met by any conceptualization that does not first of all place the individual in his social context in terms of his reference and membership group identifications. The frustration-aggression theory of Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears is an example of the over-simplification that results when the distinction repeatedly urged here is not consistently made. These authors state that "aggression is always a consequence of frustration" (16, p. 27). And they define frustration as "that condition which exists when a goal-response suffers interference" (p. 11). Although they say that "it is really necessary to be so well acquainted with the individuals concerned that goal-responses which have suffered interferences can be rather definitely identified" if the frustration of a given situation is to be diagnosed (p. 143), this attempt to strain behavioristic terminology and turn attitudes into "goal-responses" only obscures the picture and makes it more difficult than ever to separate the "goal" from the characteristic of the "response" itself which may be colored by the particular abilities or temperamental qualities of an individual. For example, these authors write that "it would be legitimate to speak of a trait of overtness or non-overtness" (p. 37). Such a trait, they believe is justified "on theoretical grounds, at least" (p. 37) because of their acceptance of G. W. Allport's "individual trait" which can be called into play by a wide variety of social situations which act as "equivalent instigators for behavior" (p. 37). But any search for a "trait of overtness or non-overtness" is likely to lead us

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up a blind alley. For if the phrase "equivalent instigators" is to mean anything at all, then its meaning must be derived from the significance of the stimulus situation to the individual either in terms of his biological needs or his socially derived attitudes. As indicated before, as soon as the "equivalence" of a situation is functionally interpreted in terms of ego-involvement, the concept of "trait" loses its meaning as a "biophysical," "neuropsychic" system.

In brief, the frustration-aggression hypothesis leaves little room for an adequate understanding of the enormous rôle of individual differences in concrete behavior and cannot include within its limited scope the variety of individual responses situationally determined. It is a common criticism of the hypothesis that by no means all frustration leads to aggression; some leads to submission, some to creative behavior, etc. Just what frustration is, its causes and consequences, would be more adequately understood if the "frustrated" individual were first analyzed in terms of his attitudes, loyalties, and aspirations, and the situation in which he finds himself, and, *then,* if an attempt were made to understand his own particular individual abilities, temperamental qualities, etc., which may have contributed so markedly to *his* frustration under a given set of circumstances which might not, on the other hand, "frustrate" another individual with different capacities and temperamental characteristics. In the same way, over 15 years ago, Luria tried to determine why some of his subjects developed neurotic behavior under the stress of socially induced conflicts while other subjects remained stable in the same situation (33).

### 2. *Limitations of Psychotherapy*

Since personal conflicts are so often due to conflicts in the objective situations themselves, it is obvious that unless conflicts existing in the objective groupings an individual identifies himself with can be resolved, the individual has little chance of resolving his own "inner" conflicts. The reasons why social psychologists must reject Freudian concepts and the psychoanalytic approach to their resolution have been pointed out elsewhere (51, ch. 14). A large part of this criticism dealt with the failure of even the more progressive analysts to take into sufficient account the conflicting identities imposed on many people in Western societies because of the contradictions in those societies themselves.

This same criticism seems equally valid with respect to the currently fashionable "nondirective" technique of psychotherapy introduced by Rogers (45). The "insight" gained by a patient during non-directive therapy will,

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in itself, do that patient little good if his "insight" has shown him certain objective conditions that must be changed if he is to lead a more "adjusted" life and get rid of the worries and the neuroses that beset him. For the patient may find that he, as an individual, can do little about them. While it can readily be admitted that the insight gained in either a directed or "non-directed" psychotherapy may serve as a necessary prelude to show some people what has to be done in the way of rearranging the objective conditions they face if they are to regain mental health and composure, it is a cruel illusion for a layman to be allowed to entertain the thought that "insight" through psychotherapy is in itself the answer to his troubles. Indeed, this insight may often only show him that his troubles are bigger than he himself thought they were and cannot be solved until basic changes occur in the social structure. Hence, it may well be that under social conditions where objective circumstances make the resolution of many personal conflicts difficult, the insight gained by psychotherapy may actually pile up visceral tensions, etc., by increasing a person's sense of futility concerning an effective course of action. This is not meant as a criticism of all psychotherapy as such. Nor are we forgetting the value expert clinical help can have for those individuals whose difficulties may stem from their own unique temperamental or other personality characteristics almost irrespective of their social milieu. But we do mean to criticize any brand of psychotherapy that, in actual concrete practice, is blind to the rôle of conflicting, contradictory conditions that often obtain outside the individual on the stimulus side and create conflicts and dilemmas within him.

For example, a clinician recently reported the case of a young man who came to a veteran's hospital in quite a neurotic condition. Conversations soon revealed that the veteran had returned from the war to his wife and children with high hopes of settling down in a job he liked and in a little house or apartment of his own. It turned out he did not find the sort of job he wanted and that he and his wife and their three children had to live with his mother-in-law in a very crowded apartment. The situation had, for him, become intolerable. Both the young man and the clinician were convinced that if he could get more or less the right kind of job and even a small apartment for his family away from in-laws, his difficulties would vanish overnight. But since the clinician could find the veteran neither a job nor an apartment, the best he could do was send him through the clinical mill for routine tests and diagnoses. To be sure, the clinical examination of this particular individual, may shed light as to why this particular man developed

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a neurosis whereas other veterans subject to roughly the same conditions were able to stick it out. But the clinician did not believe that his particular individual would gain much relief from any insight he may have derived during the clinical process. This is only one of thousands of illustrations that might be chosen.[9]

Perhaps one reason for the enormous vogue of both psychoanalysis and "nondirective" therapy is that each implicitly pretends to show a way out of personal conflict without calling into serious question basic discrepancies and contradictions in the socio-economic organization in most Western societies. The social scientist, aware of "social lag" and of the discrepancies between norms of society and the needs and aspirations of men, is suspicious by training of any strictly individualistic solution of personal problems. For he knows that men do not live in a social vacuum.

### 3. *Adjustment in Times of Rapid Social Change*

In periods of relative instability and rapid transition brought about by technological developments, crises in social organization (such as depressions, etc.), personal conflicts are likely to become both more widespread and more intense. An individual's loyalties and identifications are, in such a period, torn farther apart. Old loyalties may prove illusory, reference or membership group that have provided status may split or disintegrate. In such times, the individual seeks new identifications and loyalties. Although this subject must be reserved for detailed treatment elsewhere, it is mentioned here because it is important to point out that members of new groupings that may emerge during critical times do not find these groupings satisfying because of some particular "common trait" or common personality characteristic of the members themselves, but because of the functional significance in the lives of the members, irrespective of their individual differences (within certain limits) of the new standards or values explicitly stated by the leaders of the new group or implicitly accepted as common norms by large numbers of people.

## The Rôle of the Creative Individual

A discussion of the place of personality in social psychology would be incomplete if it left out of account the rôle of the highly original, highly gifted person who affects social change either because of some unusual innate endowment or because of some intense ego-involved attitude (or both). The

[9]Case reported privately to the author.

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point can only be mentioned here and will be treated at length in a later publications.[10]

Any close observer of social change realizes the enormous importance of the person or persons who spear-head a religious, social, aesthetic, or scientific movement. No one can deny the rôle of the great religious prophets. Americans recall the figures of Washington, Jefferson, Tom Paine and others in critical revolutionary days. Communists acknowledge the great functional rôle of Marx, Engels, and Lenin whose abilities and tenacity through thick and thin sped the development of Socialist states. In the aesthetic field, names like Leonardo, Rembrandt, and Van Gogh; or like Monteverde, Beethoven, and Debussy; or like Walt Whitman stand for creators. This in no way ignores the obvious fact that no person—no matter what his talents or abilities—can really be creative in an environment so circumscribed that his potentialities for growth are denied. Nor does a recognition of the rôle of individual differences in any way ignore the fact that leaders of social, political, religious, or aesthetic movements are necessarily products of their particular times. The point is simply that under a given set of conditions, some individuals rather than others emerge as creators or leaders.

In some historical periods, the creations of the artistic or scientific innovator (such as Galileo) are frowned on because they are so at odds with accepted standards. At other times they are not recognized for the achievements they are because there are no standards at all on which to make judgments. The tenacious individual whose thought and action lead him to question established economic, religious, or political standards is, of course, generally the victim of maltreatment or persecution. Generally speaking, the emergence of the creative individual, just as the emergence of social institutions or new biological forms, does not seem to come easy. But if the creations and innovations of gifted, able, and tenacious individuals hold out ways of resolving man's conflicts, or if they portray in new art forms expressions men sense as satisfying and meaningful, or if they give a formulation that squares with the facts of nature or of man's relationships to man, then these creations sooner or later may be accepted as new standards, new norms.

Some new art forms are blind alleys (such as the poetry of Gertrude Stein seems to be in our own day); some political-economic creations,

[10]I have deliberately left out of this discussion any consideration of what seems to me to be a necessary and important distinction between the concepts of "self" and "ego." Suffice it to say here, that the latter is composed mainly of learned attitudes (which have affective qualities), is a more restricted term than the former. Both concepts will have to be appealed to for any final understanding of personality.

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such as Nazism, prove to be horrible illusions. Why some creations last while others soon fade away is much too complicated a subject to be treated here. But the individual who—because of his unique creative gift, his fresh uncompromisingly held point of view derived from experience, analysis, research or imagination—under certain conditions can provide some of his fellow men with a new standard which they can and often do make their own, is an individual whose rôle must obviously be carefully analyzed by any social scientist who aims at perspective in his understanding of the place of personality and individual differences in social change.

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## SUMMARY

If social psychology is to have an adequate systematic basis, it must be able to understand the rôle of personality and individual differences in concrete social situations. The uniqueness of the individual is taken as a recognized fact on the basis of both biological and psychological evidence. Much of the confusion relating to the problem of personality seems to have come from the failure of some psychologists to distinguish between the uniqueness or characteristic expressions, abilities, or temperamental dispositions of an individual and the direction this characteristic behavior takes. Some sociologists and ethnologists, on the other hand, have tended to gloss over the fact of individual differences in their emphasis on cultural influences. And both psychologists and sociologists have generally failed to work out a precise account of how and why cultural influences, group attachments, or situational determinants affect the direction of behavior. The rôle of personality in social psychology can only be understood if the individual is first placed in his social context, if his loyalties and identifications with reference or membership groups is first determined. The psychological consequence of these attachments and responses of the individual is the formation of ego-involved attitudes which in large part determine the direction of behavior, irrespective of biologically rooted individual characteristics. Under certain conditions the situation acts as a determinant of behavior and may bring out latent capacities.

From this point of view, the cultural approach, as represented by Kluckhohn and Mowrer, is found to neglect the essential psychological by-products of the individual-group relationship; while the theory of traits set forth by a psychologist, Gordon Allport, by neglecting to place the individual first in his social context becomes confusing when "traits" have to carry the burden of explanation of both the direction and expression of behavior.

Certain approaches to psychotherapy fail to take into sufficient account objective social conflicts as causes of personal conflicts. The frustration-aggression hypothesis must be considered an oversimplification. The rôle

of the creative individual in affecting social change must be analyzed in any final adequate account of the place of personality in social psychology and is a problem for future study.

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